

VZCZCXRO4708
PP RUEHPA
DE RUEHUJA #0220/01 0371107
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 061107Z FEB 09
FM AMEMBASSY ABUJA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 5204
RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0038
INFO RUEHZK/ECOWAS COLLECTIVE
RUEHSA/AMEMBASSY PRETORIA 1657
RUEHYD/AMEMBASSY YAOUNDE 0626
RUEHOS/AMCONSUL LAGOS 0765
RHMFISS/HQ USAFRICOM STUTTGART GE
RHEBAAA/DEPT OF ENERGY WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEKDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUZEJAA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 04 ABUJA 000220

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR AF/W, INR/AA
DOE FOR GEORGE PERSON
BAGHDAD FOR DUNDAS MCCULLOUGH

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/30/2019
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINS](#) [PBTS](#) [EPET](#) [ECON](#) [NI](#)
SUBJECT: (C) NIGERIA: LEDUM MITEE ON THE NIGER DELTA
TECHNICAL COMMITTEE

REF: A. 08 ABUJA 1226
[1](#)B. LAGOS 14

Classified By: Political Counselor Walter Pflaumer for reasons 1.4. (b
& d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: On January 13 and 29, Ogoni activist and head of the Niger Delta Technical Committee Ledum Mitee (protect throughout) met with Consulate and Embassy Poloffs, respectively, to present copies of the Technical Committee's 152-page report, delivered to President Yar'Adua in early December. During the Lagos meeting, Mitee said that there has been no response to date from the Presidency as to what, if anything, it will do to implement the report. (Note: On January 28, the local press reported that President Yar'Adua had set up a committee to draft a white paper to guide the Federal Government on implementation of the report. End note.) The Technical Committee's subcommittee uncovered names of high level government officials and details of their participation in illegal bunkering; as a result of the findings, Mitee "does not think that the country can get out from under illegal bunkering." The Federal Government will "look into" the Technical Committee's recommendation of amnesty for militants. During the Abuja meeting, Mitee gave his views on the core Niger Delta state governors, and went on to comment on how the newly formed Niger Delta Ministry is losing a power struggle with the Niger Delta Development Corporation (NDDC). Mitee said Vice President Goodluck Jonathan is incompetent and not trusted by President Yar'Adua, and added that former Delta State Governor James Ibori has aggregated so much power to himself that it is "as if he is Vice President." The overall picture Mitee painted was that of an administration with neither the ability nor interest to solve the intractable problems facing the Niger Delta, and that neither the Technical Committee nor the new Ministry will likely have much of an impact. Ambassador will be meeting with the new Niger Delta Minister next week to follow up on these issues. END SUMMARY.

[1](#)2. (C) On January 13, Ledum Mitee (protect throughout), Chairman of the Technical Committee on the Niger Delta, brought Lagos Pol-Econ Chief a long-awaited copy of volume one of the Technical Committee's report, which was presented to President Yar'Adua in December. (Note: The report itself will be synopsized septel. End Note.) Mitee said that the

complete report is composed of three volumes, with additional separate reports that the subcommittees produced. When Mitee and the Committee met with the President to tender the report, Mitee asked the President point blank whether the President intended to solve the problem. Although the President replied "Of course", Mitee said, so far there has been no response as to what, if anything, it will do to implement the report. (Note: On January 28, the local press reported that President Yar'Adua had set up a committee to draft a white paper to guide the Federal Government on implementation of the Technical Committee report. End note.)

The Technical Committee also tried to make presentations to the National Assembly, which had said it would set up a committee to receive the report. However, Mitee said, although he "begged" several times, he was never able to meet with National Assembly members because they were always traveling.

Can the Country Get Out of Illegal Bunkering?

13. (C) The Technial Committee's subcommittee on illegal bunkering uncovered names of high-level government officials and details of their participation in the illegal bunkering, Mitee said. The information came from Naval intelligence officers, who visited the subcommittee at midnight to ensure that they were not observed, and whose visits were facilitated by retired military officers serving as members of the Technical Committee. Mitee does not think that the country "can get out from under illegal bunkering." The people who orchestrate the tapping of the pipelines, the transportation of the oil through the creeks and the loading

ABUJA 00000220 002 OF 004

onto tankers are very influential people, he said. Although he had heard "bits and pieces" over time, he had never imagined the complexity of the situation, and knowing the whole picture is frightening, he said.

Militants Want to Disarm

14. (C) Most militant leaders want to disarm; the only quid pro quo they are asking is that the government not arrest their "boys", and give them amnesty, Mitee told us. The Technical Committee recommended amnesty for militants, and the President said he would "look into it" and discuss the matter with the National Security Advisor. Mitee has also spoken with Governor Amaechi of Rivers State, who said he would wait to decide on amnesty after he had seen what the Federal Government will do. Speaking of the arrest of the militant Jackrich in the palace of the Amayanabo of Calabar, Mitee asked, "But what about his boys and his guns?" The Governors do not want disarmament; they want to be able to use the boys in the elections, and to be seen as the ones who have leverage with the youths, he continued. Amaechi should create a window so that militant youths who want to disarm can be rehabilitated. The militant youths hate the politicians, because they know they are being used; however, they know that at least at election time they will earn some money, Mitee said.

VP's Staff Made Committee's Work Difficult

15. (C) Mitee said the Technical Committee was under the office of Vice President Goodluck Jonathan, which has only one person, surnamed Akachukwu, who deals with the Niger Delta. Mitee maintained that in the past Akachukwu did the "dirty" jobs for the Vice President; as a result, the Vice President cannot get rid of him, and no one dares complain about him. Akachukwu was the person responsible for orchestrating the failed Niger Delta Summit, which was roundly rejected by Niger Delta stakeholders. Prior to the collapse of the Summit, Akachukwu had already written the report with the conclusions that he intended the Summit participants to reach, and then issue as their own; when the Summit did not happen, he tried unsuccessfully to get the Technical Committee to validate the report. When the

Technical Committee refused, Akachukwu did everything he could to frustrate its work, Mitee said. (Comment: Mitee also mentioned Akachukwu in the Abuja meeting, describing him as having previously worked as a "bagman" sent by the international oil companies to pay off local villagers who have complaints about oil operations. We believe that this person is the Akachukwu Sullivan mentioned in reftel A. End comment.) The Commission was told to work out of the Abuja Hilton, but Mitee contended Committee members never received their full per diem, which presented a hardship for them. Arrangements were made by the Vice President's Office for laptop computers for the Committee, which were leased from a private firm at an exorbitant cost; Mitee said he could have purchased two computers for the same price as charged by the leasing firm for a ten day rental of just one. In addition, when the Committee tried to travel to another location so they could complete the report without interruption, they were told that they could not take the leased laptops with them. The Committee members ended up working at their own expense.

Corruption in AG's Office, EFCC, Yet Hope in Some States

16. (C) What is needed is a Ribadu (an anti-corruption czar for the Niger Delta), Mitee said. However, the days of Ribadu are gone; now, according to Mitee, even lower level officials of the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) are collecting bribes like common policemen. Mitee said he knows the EFCC official who comes to his village, and in a recent conversation with him expressed surprise that the official was now taking bribes. The official replied that since his superiors had begun doing so, he was following suit. While the Committee was working at the Hilton, Mitee

ABUJA 00000220 003 OF 004

said, he joined a friend for a drink one day at the bar. Also at the table was a young man buying 30,000 naira bottles (approximately USD 200) of champagne; Mitee counted six consumed while he was there. The young man was introduced to Mitee as the younger brother of Attorney General Michael Aondoakaa, "the one you talk to if you have a case at the EFCC," an introduction the young man laughingly acknowledged. Everyone is running after money, Mitee lamented.

17. (C) Asked where he looks for hope, Mitee said he believes new Edo State Governor Adams Oshiomhole has the potential to do a good job. However, Edo State is a poor state, and it will be difficult to do things without resources. In Cross River, Donald Duke was corrupt, but less so than other governors, and he got a lot right, Mitee said. Anambra Governor Peter Obi is also good, but so "frugal" with government spending that his commissioners do not like their jobs. In Rivers, the Movement for the Survival of the Ogoni People, (MOSOP), of which Mitee is a longtime leader, has adopted an anti-kidnapping stance. Mitee said he had approached Rivers State Governor Rotimi Amaechi to ask if MOSOP could partner with the state government to stop kidnapping, and passed along credible information to the Governor. Amaechi has yet to respond, Mitee said.

18. (C) Some days, Mitee said, it is hard for him to sleep. He took on the job as Technical Committee Chairman because he thought there was space to make a difference, to make a change for the better. Now, however, he fears he is flogging a dead horse. The poor in the Niger Delta are suffering; they do not know who to trust because everyone is connected to someone. The Niger Delta people are angry and are getting angrier, and things could get worse before they get better, Mitee said. When the price of oil was high, the government could afford the losses from illegal bunkering. Now however, with the oil price down, revenues are falling. The government could "lose its grip on everything" -- it would only take a small trigger, Mitee opined. He had had so much hope for this government when it began, but in two years it has brought nothing but corruption.

The Core Delta State Governors

19. (C) On January 29, Mitee also met with Abuja Poloffs to give them a copy of the Niger Delta Technical Committee's report. While much of what he said was the same as described above, Mitee gave his views on core Niger Delta governors and the growing rivalry between Niger Delta Ministry Minister Obong Ufot Ekaette and the NDDC's Managing Director Timi Alaibe. Mitee said that Delta State Governor Emmanuel Uduaghan had been most helpful to the Technical Committee, providing staff that he put up in the Sheraton Hotel who daily worked alongside the Committee. He also said Uduaghan was looking for a middle ground with the militants, and was open to compromise. He said that Rivers Governor Amaechi's "zero tolerance" attitude toward ferreting the militants out of their camps could be helpful, but also he said that Amaechi had a short attention span and did not follow through on some issues regarding the militants. He said Bayelsa Governor Timipre Sylva "doesn't have the (leadership) capacity to get things done," and agreed that his strategy of buying peace with the militants was a temporary expedient only, and would not lead to lasting solutions. Finally, Mitee said that Akwa Ibom Governor Godswill Akpabio was "unfocused, but means well."

The NDDC, Alaibe, and Ibori

10. (C) Mitee said the new Niger Delta Ministry was off to an inauspicious start, with Minister Ekaette having originally been given no budget with which to set up his Ministry; he also had to hire staff from scratch, and only found office space in early January. The office has no computers except those few that Ekaette apparently paid for out of his own pocket. Ekaette, he said, "has a blank look on his face" and "doesn't have a clue" as to how to proceed. Although from

ABUJA 00000220 004 OF 004

the Ibibio tribe of Akwa Ibom state, Mitee maintained Ekaette has been out of the Delta so long he has lost touch with the issues on the ground. He added that Ekaette has been stymied at every turn by NDDC Managing Director Alaibe, who has been emboldened by Yar'Adua's failure to explicitly subordinate the NDDC to the new Ministry from the start. According to Mitee, Alaibe wanted the Minister slot, and upon not receiving it, has grown more insubordinate and hostile as the weeks pass. Mitee told us Alaibe recently removed Ekaette's photographs from NDDC offices, violating the protocol that offices display the photo of the Minister to whom they report. Lastly, Mitee commented that former Delta Governor James Ibori was an unseen hand in many of the President's decisions, saying he was "acting like the Vice President." Mitee told us President Yar'Adua told him that he mistrusts Jonathan's staff. Jonathan himself, Mitee pointed out, "was not completely neutral" in delaying with the Delta.

11. (C) COMMENT: Mitee paints a depressing picture, sadly consistent with the first 19 months of Yar'Adua's Presidency. Yar'Adua's weak management style and health problems have created a vacuum into which chaos, malfeasance, and competing egos have stepped. It would be difficult enough for the Niger Delta Ministry to overcome entrenched interests to bring a lasting solution to the Delta region. To do so without personnel, resources, or political support from the presidency is likely impossible. END COMMENT.

12. (U) This cable was coordinated with Consulate Lagos.
SANDERS